

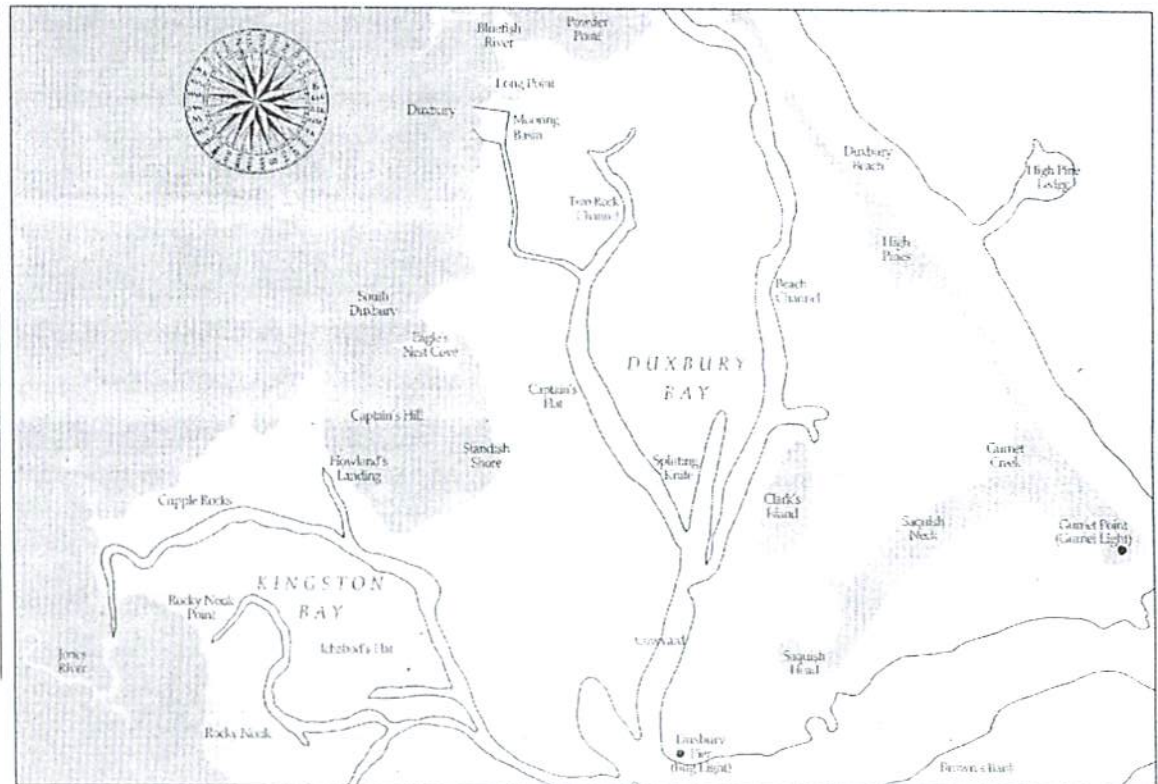
Part I: A Tale of Two Journeys

Bay in the Balance

An in-depth report on the future of Duxbury Bay



This is the first of a 10-part series on the status of Duxbury Bay. It was researched and written by Debora Katz and will focus on the history and future of Duxbury's greatest natural treasure. In part one, Katz writes of two journeys: one that she took around the bay this summer and another, an imaginary trip, that Myles Standish might have taken 370 years ago.



Much has changed in Duxbury Bay since the days of Myles Standish.

Courtesy of the Duxbury Rural & Historical Societies

Navigating the Waters of 1632

DUXBURY, 1632 – It is early morning on a summer day in Duxbury, and you are Myles Standish, the great, Plymouth Colony army captain. You rise from your feather bed at dawn, red hair askew, to greet your wife, Barbara, and your four sons. In the keeping room you share breakfast. You eat quickly as your old friend Hobomok, a survivor of the dying Wampanoag tribe, waits at a sandy spot on the southeast side of Standish Shore for a day of seafowl hunting. He is, as usual, stoically patient.

Hobomok has built a sturdy dugout canoe and is preparing for the trip. Before heading toward the popular marshes to the east you scan the terrain of the bay, eyes searching for potential conflict. It is the soldier in you that will not rest, not even on this pastoral morning, and it underscores the respect you have earned from the colonists as a military leader.

Satisfied that all is quiet, you shove off toward the mouth of the Jones River. A deer herd moves into a wooded area above the shoreline, and in the

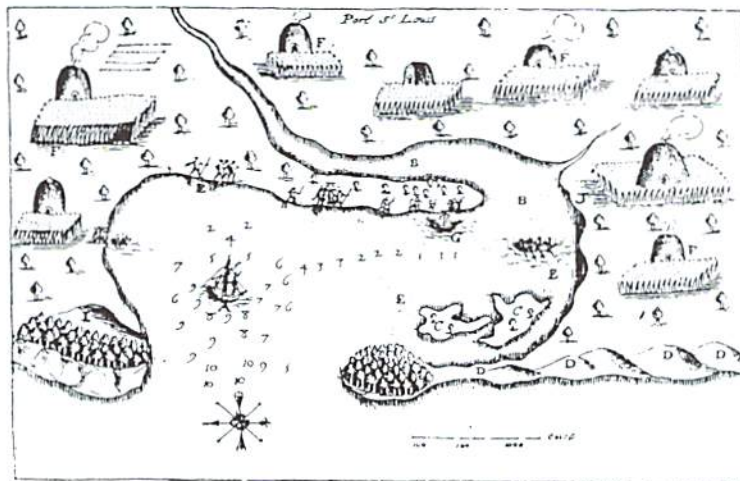
distance you catch a glimpse of your younger sons picking berries. As they so often do, the children eat almost as much as they pick.

You paddle southward and pause to look back where you can see the thatched roof of your sturdy, long house on the bluff overlooking the bay. It is the only structure in sight; your



Captain Standish

neighbor, Francis Eaton's homestead is north of your 100 acres and beyond that lie the 80 acres of William Brewster near Eagle's Nest Creek. His new Duxbury home is still in the planning stage.



French explorer Samuel de Champlain drew this map of Duxbury Bay in 1605.

Courtesy of the Standish Shore Improvement Association

You begin to relax, and enjoy the salty air of a June morning. The bay's clean clear water and the beauty of the thick forests that fill the peninsula always amaze you as you paddle by. You are a long way from the gritty sounds and sights you left when the Mayflower set sail from Plymouth, England, years ago. Above, a large flock of black ducks passes as you reach Morton's Hole. They interrupt the shifting sounds of dipping paddles. In the bow, Hobomok quietly lobbies for a chance to fish and weighs in on the best method for spearing bluefish.

You now pass Morton's Hole, a popular gardening spot of the native Patuxet, and eventually reach the confluence where the Jones River meets the bay. The river, which flows north, was named after the kindly Captain of the Mayflower, who, rather than return home in early 1621, kept his ship at anchor to help the colonists get through that first brutal winter.

The current is moving faster now, and the canoe glides toward the open sea. You turn left as the bay opens and, looking across, spot an island barely visible through the thousands of gulls and terns swarming its rocky shore. It is Clark's Island, named after John Clarke, the Mayflower mate, who was the first to step on its shores during a Pilgrim exploration 12 years earlier.

As you come closer, the island's forest of red cedars reflects in the bay's gentle waters. To the right are the sands of

Saquish, appropriately named by the natives; it means "place of many clams." They came here often, using foot-long oyster shells to dig for clams and oysters.

The waters are calm this morning, protected by the long stretch of towering sand dunes. You pass a stand of woodland named after the gurnet fish that existed in great numbers off a headland in the English Channel. At Gurnet Creek, colonists often catch large quantities of striped bass.

The canoe moves quickly now from the power of Hobomok's arms, and you spot a clump of pine trees, roughly two-thirds the distance from the Gurnet to the marshes where you plan to hunt. It is called High Pines.

If not for the huge sand dunes, you could see the open ocean on the other side where seals and nesting turtles are bathing. Looking up you notice thousands of delicate birds, their species unknown to you. Each summer they appear, frantically feeding on the mud flats and resting on shore during high tide. Then, as the weather turns cold, they disappear only to return again at the same time next year.

Before reaching the hunting site, you give in to Hobomok's wish to try out his new staff at a favorite fishing spot near the Blue Fish River. In the distance you see John Alden, the cooper, tending his fields on a rise of land on the south side of the river. His wife, Priscilla, whom he married five years earlier, is at home minding the brood of

the growing Alden Family. Alden, you think, is a lucky man.

The canoe now makes its way around a wooded peninsula. Here, among the vast marshes, the sky teems with seafowl. You find a grassy slope shaded by tall pines and beach the dugout. Then, you prepare your fowling piece. You aim toward the mass of ducks above and light the .lint. A loud boom echoes throughout the bay, and several waterfowl fall from the sky. Hobomok gathers them into a canvas bag. You will pluck them once you return to the homestead.

The bay continues to empty as you paddle home. When you finally reach Standish Shore, having made a circle of the bay, you and Hobomok strain to drag the canoe over mud flats. You remember Barbara's request for shellfish and, using a garden hoe, dig into the mud; minutes later you are satisfied with your haul of quahogs. The sack fills quickly.

It was another successful day of hunting and fishing on the bay that you found so fit for shipping when you first laid eyes on it years earlier. It is a most hopeful place, you recall thinking. It is a good place to call home. ▲

CREDITS

The Bay in the Balance series is edited by David Cutler. Special thanks to David Grossman for providing much of the photography for this series. For more of his work please visit www.gurnetroad.com